

# **A Guide To The Hidden Wisdom of Kabbalah**

## ***With Ten Complete Kabbalah Lessons***

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## Introduction

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The laws of nature, our place in the world and our behavior have been studied by scientists and philosophers for thousands of years.

Along with logical assumptions, science uses quantifiable research and data. Yet our scientists and researchers have discovered that the more they advance in their research, the more obscure and confusing they find the world to be.

Science has undoubtedly brought enormous progress into the world, yet it is limited. Scientific tools cannot measure man's inner world, his soul, behavior and sources of motivation. Man, the major component of the creation, is still left without knowledge about his role in this universe.

Man has always looked for answers to the basic questions of life: Who am I? What is the purpose of my being here? Why does the world exist? Do we continue to exist after our physical being has completed its tasks?

In this world of constant pressure, some find temporary satisfaction in Eastern techniques, measures aimed at relaxation, or reducing suffering by minimizing personal expectations and desires. Various forms of meditation, nutrition, and physical and mental exercise quiet man's natural instincts and enable him to feel more comfortable from the point of view of his physical state. This process teaches him to lower his expectations, yet leaves him in conflict with his true desires.

Our life experience teaches us that we have unlimited desires – and only limited resources to satisfy them. This is the primary reason there is no way to completely satisfy all our desires and therefore avoid suffering. That is the subject of Kabbalah. Kabbalah answers the basic questions of life and guides us toward achieving unlimited satisfaction on a daily basis.

The essential questions of man's being add another dimension to human suffering. They do not allow us to feel satisfied even when this or that goal has been fulfilled. When one attains the goal he strives for, he immediately feels he's missing yet another pleasure. This prevents him from enjoying his achievements, and his suffering is renewed. In retrospect, he sees that he has spent most of his time making an effort to achieve his goals, and has gained very little pleasure from the successes themselves.

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Everyone, each in his own way, tries to answer these questions from the sources of information at his disposal. Each one of us formulates our own perception of the world based on our experience. Reality and everyday life constantly put this perception to the test, making us react, improve, or otherwise change it. With some of us, this process occurs on a conscious level; with others it happens unconsciously.

Kabbalah reaches out to all those who are seeking awareness. It teaches you how to add an essential feeling of the spiritual sphere – the sixth sense – that will affect your life in this world. This will allow you to perceive the upper world – the Creator – and to gain control over your life.

The Bible, The Zohar, The Tree of Life and other authentic spiritual sources were set down in order to teach us how to progress in the spiritual realms, to study them and to receive spiritual knowledge. They explain how to set out on a path to spiritual ascent in this world. Over the generations, Kabbalists have written many books in various styles, each in accordance with the era in which they lived.

In total, four languages were created to introduce us to our spiritual reality: the language of the Bible (which includes the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets and the Scriptures), the language of legends, a legalistic language, and the language of Kabbalah, which describes the spiritual upper-worlds system and how to reach it. The differences in languages simply present various perspectives on the same subject in different formats – each suiting the generation it was intended for.

The Kabbalist Baal HaSulam writes in his book *Fruits of the Wise*:

The inner wisdom of Kabbalah is the same as that of the Bible, The Zohar and the legends, with the only difference between them being the manner of the logic. It is rather like an ancient tongue translated into four languages. It is self-evident that the wisdom itself did not change at all due to the change in language. All we need to consider is which is most convenient and widely accepted for conveyance.

By reading this book, you will be able to take your first steps in understanding the roots of human behavior and the laws of nature. The contents present the essential principles of the Kabbalistic approach and describe the wisdom of Kabbalah and the way it works. *A Guide to the Hidden Wisdom of Kabbalah* is intended for those searching for a sensible and reliable method of studying the phenomena of our world, for those seeking to understand the reasons for suffering and pleasure, for those seeking answers to the major questions of life.

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## Part I

# The Need for Kabbalah in Our Daily Lives

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Kabbalah is an accurate method to investigate and define man's position in the universe. The wisdom of Kabbalah tells us the reason why man exists, why he is born, why he lives, what the purpose of his life is, where he comes from and where he is going after he completes his life in this world.

Kabbalah is a method of reaching the spiritual world. It teaches us about the spiritual world, and by studying it, we develop another sense. With the help of this sense we can be in touch with the upper worlds.

Kabbalah is not a theoretical study, but a very practical one. Man learns about himself, who he is, what he is like. He learns what he needs to do to change himself stage by stage and step by step. He conducts his research through his inner self.

All experimentation is conducted on himself, within himself. That is why Kabbalah is called "The Hidden Wisdom." Through Kabbalah a person undergoes internal changes that only he feels and knows are taking place. This activity occurs within a person; it is unique to him, and only he knows about it.

The word Kabbalah comes from the Hebrew word *lekabbel*, to receive. Kabbalah describes the motives of actions as "the desire to receive." This desire refers to receiving various kinds of pleasure. In order to receive pleasure, a person is usually willing to invest great effort. The question is, how can one attain the maximum amount of pleasure while paying a minimum price for it? Everyone tries to answer this question in his own way.

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There is a certain order to the way the desire to receive develops and grows. In the first stage, man lusts after physical pleasure. Then he seeks money and honor. An even stronger desire makes him thirst for power. He may later develop a desire for spirituality, which is at the peak of the pyramid. A person who recognizes how great his desire for spirituality begins to seek ways of satisfying this desire.

The passage through the stages of the desire to receive makes a person become familiar with his abilities and limitations.

Kabbalah deals with the upper worlds, the roots of our feelings and thoughts, which we cannot grasp. Since we have no control over the worlds, we do not know how and why our feelings and thoughts are created. We wonder at experiences such as sweet, bitter, pleasant, rough and so forth. We are unsuccessful at building scientific tools to examine our feelings, even in the field of psychology, psychiatry and other social disciplines. Behavioral factors remain hidden from our understanding.

Kabbalah is a system for scientifically evaluating our feelings: It takes the total of our feelings and desires, and provides an exact scientific formula for each and every phenomenon, at each level, for every type of understanding and feeling.

This is the work of feelings combined with intellect. It uses, for beginning students, geometry, matrices and diagrams. When studying Kabbalah, they recognize each of their own feelings and begin to understand it. They know what name it should be given according to its power, direction and character.

The wisdom of Kabbalah is an ancient and proven method. Through it, man can receive higher awareness and attain spirituality. This is really his goal in this world. When a person feels a desire for spirituality, he starts to feel a longing for it, and can then develop the desire through the wisdom of Kabbalah that has been provided by the Creator.

Kabbalah is a word that describes the aim of the Kabbalist: to attain everything man is capable of, as a thinking being, the highest of all creatures.



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## Chapter 2: Why Study Kabbalah?

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When an ordinary person studies the writings of the Kabbalists, he learns about what was formerly hidden from him. Only after acquiring the sixth sense through study does he begin to feel and see what was previously unrevealed.

Everyone has a natural ability to develop this sixth sense, and that is the reason Kabbalists transmit their knowledge of the structure of the upper, spiritual world. [See the chapter on “[Sensing Reality Through Kabbalah.](#)”]

When a person is exposed to Kabbalistic materials, he may not at first grasp what he is reading. But if he wants to understand, and tries to do so in the proper manner, he invokes what is called the Surrounding Light, the light that corrects him; and very gradually he is shown his spiritual reality. The terms “to correct” and “correction” are used in Kabbalah to describe a change in the desire to receive, i.e., to acquire the qualities of the spiritual world and of the Creator.

Everyone has this sixth, still-dormant spiritual sense; this is called the point of the heart. Opposite it stands the light, which will eventually fill the point, the sixth sense, when it develops.

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The sixth sense is also called the spiritual Vessel (*Kli*), and it continues to exist even without material reality. The spiritual Vessel of the ordinary person who has never studied Kabbalah is not sufficiently developed to feel the spiritual world. When he studies the original Kabbalah writings in the proper way, this light enlightens the point of the heart and begins to develop it. The point then begins to widen and it expands sufficiently to allow the Surrounding Light to enter it. When the light enters into the point of the heart, it gives a person a spiritual feeling. This point is the person’s soul.

Nothing is possible without help from the upper world, without the Surrounding Light descending from above and gradually lighting the way for a person. Even when we do not recognize this light, there is a direct connection between the point of the heart and the light due to fill it, as planned from above. Studying Kabbalah books enables a person to connect

to the source of the light, and gradually come to feel a desire for spirituality. This process is called *segula* (remedy).

Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag wrote in the Introduction to the Study of the Ten Sefirot:

Accordingly, why did the Kabbalists instruct everyone to study Kabbalah? While it is great and worthwhile publicizing that there is an incomparably wonderful quality to studying Kabbalah wisdom, even though they do not know what they are studying, it is the tremendous desire to understand what they are studying that awakens the lights surrounding their soul. That means that every person is assured the possibility of eventually attaining all the wonderful achievements the Creator intended for us in planning Creation.

Those who do not attain them in this incarnation will do so in another, until the Creator's intention is fulfilled. Even if a person does not achieve this completion, the lights are destined to be his; the Surrounding Lights wait for him to prepare his Vessel to receive them. Therefore, even when he lacks the Vessels, when a person is engaged in this wisdom and recalls the names of the lights and Vessels waiting and belonging to him, they will shine on him but only to a certain degree. But they will not penetrate his inner soul, since his Vessels are not yet ready to accept them. Kabbalah is the only means to create the Vessel to receive the light of the Creator. The light he receives when he is engaged in the wisdom imparts to him a grace from above, bestowing an abundance of holiness and purity on him, bringing him closer to reaching completion.

Kabbalah is special in that it gives a person a taste of spirituality while he is studying, and from that experience he comes to prefer spirituality to materialism. In proportion to his spirituality, he clarifies his will and learns to distance himself from things he was once attracted to, much as an adult is no longer attracted to childish games.

Why do we need Kabbalah? Because Kabbalah is given to us as a springboard for change. It is given to us so that we can know and perceive the Creator at any given moment throughout the day. These are the only reasons why the wisdom of Kabbalah was provided. Whoever learns Kabbalah in order to alter himself and improve himself, in order to know the Creator, reaches the stage in which he begins to see he can improve, and fulfill his true destiny in this lifetime.





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The Kabbalist is a researcher who studies his nature using a proven, time-tested and accurate method. He studies the essence of his existence using tools we can all utilize – feelings, intellect and heart.

A Kabbalist looks like an ordinary person. He need not have any special skills, talents, or occupation. He need not be a wise man or wear a holy expression. At some point in his life, this ordinary person decided to look for a way in which he would find credible answers to the questions that were troubling him. By utilizing a distinct method of learning, he was successful in acquiring an extra sense – a sixth sense – which is the spiritual sense.

Through this sense, the Kabbalist feels the spiritual spheres as a clear reality, just as we feel our reality here; he receives knowledge about the spiritual spheres, the upper worlds, and the revelation of higher forces. These worlds are called upper worlds, since they are higher than and beyond our world.

The Kabbalist ascends from his current spiritual level to the next one. This movement brings him from one upper world to the next. He sees the roots from which everything that exists here has developed, everything that fills our world, including ourselves. The Kabbalist is simultaneously in our world, and in the upper worlds. This quality is shared by all Kabbalists.

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Kabbalists receive the real information that surrounds us, and feel this reality. Therefore, they can study it, be familiar with it, and teach us about it. They provide a new method through which we can meet the source of our lives, leading us to spirituality. They use books that are written in a special language. We must read these books in a special way, so they become a Vessel for discovering the truth for us as well.

In the books they have written, the Kabbalists inform us about the techniques based on man's personal experiences. From their all-encompassing point of view, they have found the way to help those who would follow, and then climb the same ladder as they did. Their method is called the wisdom of Kabbalah.

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## Chapter 4: The History of Kabbalah and The Zohar

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The first Kabbalist we know of was the patriarch Abraham. He saw the wonders of human existence, asked questions of the Creator, and the upper worlds were revealed to him. The knowledge he acquired, and the method used in its acquisition, he passed on to coming generations. Kabbalah was passed among the Kabbalists from mouth to mouth for many centuries. Each Kabbalist added his unique experience and personality to this body of accumulated knowledge. Their spiritual achievements were described in the language relevant to the souls of their generation.

Kabbalah continued to develop after the Bible (the Five Books of Moses) was written. In the period between the First and Second Temples (586 BCE – 515 BCE), it was already being studied in groups. Following the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) and until the current generation, there have been three particularly important periods in the development of Kabbalah, during which the most important writings on Kabbalah study methods were issued.

The first period occurred during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, when the book of The Zohar was written by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, “the Rashbi.” This was around the year 150 CE. Rabbi Shimon was a pupil of the famous Rabbi Akiva (40 CE – 135 CE). Rabbi Akiva and several of his disciples were tortured and killed by the Romans, who felt threatened by his teaching of the Kabbalah. They flayed his skin and stripped his bones with an iron scraper (like today’s currycomb) for cleaning their horses. Following the death of 24,000 of Rabbi Akiva’s disciples, the Rashbi was authorized by Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yehuda Ben Baba to teach future generations the Kabbalah as it had been taught to him. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and four others were the only ones to survive. Following the capture and imprisonment of Rabbi Akiva, the Rashbi escaped with his son, Elazar. They hid in a cave for 13 years.

They emerged from the cave with The Zohar, and with a crystallized method for studying Kabbalah and achieving spirituality. The Rashbi reached the 125 levels man can achieve during his life in this world. The Zohar tells us that he and his son reached the level called “Eliyahu the Prophet,” meaning that the Prophet himself came to teach them.

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The Zohar is written in a unique form; it is in the form of parables and is presented in Aramaic, a language spoken in biblical times. The Zohar tells us that Aramaic is “the reverse side of Hebrew,” the hidden side of Hebrew. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai did not write this himself; he conveyed the wisdom and the way to reach it in an organized manner by dictating its contents to Rabbi Aba. Aba rewrote The Zohar in such a way that only those who are worthy of understanding would be able to do so.

The Zohar explains that human development is divided into 6,000 years, during which time souls undergo a continuous process of development in each generation. At the end of the process souls reach a position of “the end of correction,” i.e., the highest level of spirituality and wholeness.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai was one of the greatest of his generation. He wrote and interpreted many Kabbalistic subjects that were published and are well known to this day. On the other hand, the book of The Zohar, disappeared after it was written.

According to legend, The Zohar writings were kept hidden in a cave in the vicinity of Safed in Israel. They were found several hundred years later by Arabs residing in the area. A Kabbalist from Safed purchased some fish at the market one day, and was astonished to discover the priceless value of the paper in which they had been wrapped. He immediately set about purchasing the remaining pieces of paper from the Arabs, and collected them into a book.

This happened because the nature of hidden things is such that they must be discovered at a suitable moment, when suitable souls reincarnate and enter into our world. That is how The Zohar came to be revealed over time.

The study of these writings was conducted in secret by small groups of Kabbalists. The first publication of this book was by Rabbi Moshe de Leon, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Spain.

The second period of the development of Kabbalah is very important to the Kabbalah of our generation. This is the period of “the Ari,” Rabbi Yitzhak Luria, who created the transition between the two methods of Kabbalah study. The first time the pure language of Kabbalah appeared was in the writings of the Ari. The Ari proclaimed the start of a period of open mass study of Kabbalah.

The Ari was born in Jerusalem in 1534. A child when his father died, his mother took him to Egypt where he grew up in his uncle’s home.

During his life in Egypt, he made his living in commerce but devoted most of his time to studying Kabbalah. Legend has it that he spent seven years in isolation on the island of Roda on the Nile where he studied The Zohar, books by the first Kabbalists, and writings by another rabbi of his generation, “the Ramak,” Rabbi Moshe Cordovero.

In 1570, the Ari arrived in Safed, Israel. Despite his youth, he immediately started teaching Kabbalah. His greatness was soon recognized; all the wise men of Safed, who were very knowledgeable in the hidden and revealed Wisdom, came to study with him, and he became famous. For a year-and-a-half his disciple Rabbi Chaim Vital committed to paper the answers to many of the questions that arose during his studies.

The Ari left behind a basic system for studying Kabbalah, which is still in use today. Some of these writings are *Etz Hachayim* (The Tree of Life), *Sha'ar HaKavanot* (The Gateway of Intentions), *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* (The Gateway of Reincarnation), and others. The Ari died in 1572, still a young man. His writings were archived according to his last wish, in order not to reveal his doctrine before the time was ripe.

The great Kabbalists provided the method and taught it, but knew that their generation was still unable to appreciate its dynamics. Therefore, they often preferred to hide or even burn their writings. We know that Baal HaSulam burned and destroyed a major part of his writings. There is special significance in this fact that the knowledge was committed to paper, and later destroyed. Whatever is revealed in the material world affects the future, and is revealed easier the second time.

Rabbi Vital ordered other parts of the Ari's writings to be hidden and buried with him. A portion was handed down to his son, who arranged the famous writings, *The Eight Gates*. Much later, a group of scholars headed by Rabbi Vital's grandson removed another portion from the grave.

Study of *The Zohar* in groups started openly only during the period of the Ari. The study of *The Zohar* then prospered for two hundred years. In the great Hassidut period (1750 – to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), almost every great rabbi was a Kabbalist. Kabbalists appeared, mainly in Poland, Russia, Morocco, Iraq, Yemen and several other countries. Then, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, interest in Kabbalah waned until it almost completely disappeared.

The third period of the development of Kabbalah contains an additional method to the Ari's doctrines, written in this generation by Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, who authored the commentary of the *Sulam* (ladder) of *The Zohar*, and the Ari's teachings. His method is particularly suited to the souls of the current generation.

Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag is known as "Baal HaSulam" for his rendition of the *Sulam* of *The Zohar*. Born in 1885 in Lodz, Poland, he absorbed a deep knowledge of the written and oral law in his youth, and later became a judge and teacher in Warsaw. In 1921, he immigrated to Israel with his family and became the rabbi of Givat Shaul in Jerusalem. He was already immersed in writing his own doctrine when he began to pen the commentary of *The Zohar* in 1943. Baal HaSulam finished writing his commentary of *The Zohar* in 1953. He died the following year and was buried in Jerusalem at the Givat Shaul cemetery.

His eldest son, Rabbi Baruch Shalom Ashlag, "the Rabash," became his successor. His books are structured according to his father's instructions. They gracefully elaborate on his father's writings, facilitating our comprehension of his father's commentaries as handed down to our generation.

The Rabash was born in Warsaw in 1907 and immigrated to Israel with his father. Only after Rabbi Baruch was married did his father include him in study groups of selected students learning the hidden wisdom of Kabbalah. He was soon allowed to teach his father's new students.

Following his father's death, he took it upon himself to continue teaching the special method he had learned. Despite his great achievements, like his father, he insisted on keeping to a very modest way of life. During his lifetime he worked as a cobbler, construction worker and clerk. Externally, he lived like any ordinary person, but devoted every spare moment to studying and teaching Kabbalah. The Rabash died in 1991.

Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, the Baal HaSulam, is the recognized spiritual leader for our generation. He is the only one in this generation who has written a fully comprehensive and updated commentary of The Zohar and the writings of the Ari. These books, with the addition of his son Rabbi Baruch Ashlag's essays, are the only source we can use to assist us in further progress.

When we study their books, we are actually studying The Zohar and the Ari's writings through the most recent commentaries (of the past 50 years). This is a life belt for our generation, since it enables us to study ancient texts as if they had been written now, and to use them as a springboard to spirituality.

Baal HaSulam's method suits everyone, and the *sulam* (ladder) he built in his writings ensures that none of us need fear studying Kabbalah. Anyone learning Kabbalah is assured that within three to five years he will be able to reach spiritual spheres, all realities and divine understanding, the name given to that which is above and beyond us and not yet felt by us. If we study according to the books of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, the Baal HaSulam, we can reach true correction.

The study method is constructed to awaken in us a desire to understand the upper worlds. We are given a greater desire to get to know our roots and to connect with them. We are then empowered to improve and fulfill ourselves.

All three great Kabbalists are of the same soul: first appearing as Rabbi Shimon, on a second occasion as the Ari, and the third time as Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag. On each occasion, the timing was ripe for further revelation because the people of that generation were worthy, and the soul descended to teach the method suitable for that generation.

Each generation is increasingly worthy of discovering The Zohar. What was written by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and hidden was later discovered by the generation of Rabbi Moshe de Leon, and then by the Ari, who started to interpret it in the language of Kabbalah. These writings were also stored away and partly rediscovered when the timing was right. Our generation is privileged to learn from the Sulam, which enables everyone to study Kabbalah and to correct himself now.

We see that The Zohar speaks to each generation. In each generation it is more revealed and better understood than in the generation before. Each generation opens the book of The Zohar in a unique way, suited to the roots of its particular soul.

Importantly, at the same time, an attempt is made to conceal Kabbalistic writings so that those feeling the need to seek them will discover them by themselves. The Kabbalists evidently know that the process of change requires two conditions: correct timing and maturity of the soul. We are witnessing a very interesting occurrence, characterized by the breakthrough and signaling of a new era in the study of Kabbalah.

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## Chapter 5: Who Can Study Kabbalah?

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Whenever Kabbalah is discussed, statements are tossed about such as: One can go mad studying Kabbalah; it is safe to study Kabbalah only after the age of 40; a man must be married and have at least three children before embarking on its study; women are forbidden to study Kabbalah, etc.

Kabbalah is open to all. It is for those who truly wish to correct themselves in order to attain spirituality. The need comes from the soul's urge to correct itself. That is actually the only test to determine whether a person is ready to study Kabbalah: the desire to correct oneself. This desire must be genuine and free of outside pressure, since only one's self can discover one's true desire.

The great Kabbalist, the Ari, wrote that from his generation onwards Kabbalah was intended for men, women and children, and that all could and should study Kabbalah. The greatest Kabbalist in our generation, Yehuda Ashlag, Baal HaSulam, left a new study method for this generation. It is suitable for anyone wishing to embark on the study of Kabbalah.

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#### ● Lesson 9

A person finds his way to Kabbalah when he is no longer satisfied by material reward and hopes studying will provide answers, clarification and new opportunities. He no longer finds solutions in this world to the significant questions concerning his existence. More often than not, the hope of finding answers is not even cognitive; he simply takes an interest and finds it necessary.

Such a person has questions: Who am I? Why was I born? Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why do I exist in the world? Was I already here? Will I reappear? Why is there so much suffering in the world? Can it somehow be avoided? How can I attain pleasure, completeness, peace of mind? Unconsciously, he feels the answers to these questions can be found only beyond the realm of this world.

The one answer to these questions is to know and feel the upper worlds, and the way to do so is through Kabbalah. Through its wisdom, man enters the upper worlds with all his feelings. They are worlds that provide all of the



reasons for his existence in this world. He takes control of his life, thereby attaining his goal – tranquility, pleasure and completeness – while he is still in this world.

In the Introduction to the Study of the Ten *Sefirot* it is written: “If we put our hearts into answering just one famous question, I am sure all questions and doubts will disappear from the horizon and we will find they are gone. And that tiny question is – What is the point of our lives?”

Anyone attracted to the study of Kabbalah due to this question is welcome to study Kabbalah. The one who reaches serious study feels this question and asks himself constantly: “What is the point of our lives?” This is what urges him to search and find answers.

People want quick cures. They want to learn about magic, meditation and healing associated with Kabbalah. They are not truly interested in the revelation of the upper worlds, or in learning the methods of reaching spiritual realms. This does not qualify as a genuine desire to study Kabbalah.

When the time is right and the need is there, a person will look for a framework of study and will not be satisfied until he finds one. Everything depends on the root of man’s soul and that point of his heart. A true desire within his heart to discover and feel the upper worlds will lead him to the way of Kabbalah.

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